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'Red' Raborn and the CIA

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Spy Who Came in Cold

For four months it was a typical Washington guessing game. Who, the guessers were asking, would take over when John A. McCone, 62, retired as director of the CIA?

As usual, the guessers had plenty of candidates for the Central Intelligence Agency's top job. Among those mentioned were Maxwell D. Taylor, ambassador to South Vietnam; Cyrus R. Vance, deputy Defense Secretary; Roswell L. Gilpatric, Mr. Vance's predecessor; and, before he was named Commerce Secretary, pharmaceutical executive John T. Connor. Last week the game ended. The job went to a man who had not figured in the speculation, retired Vice Adm. William F. Raborn, Jr., 59.

It was, in some ways, an odd choice. For one thing, the Administration had seemed determined to name a civilian to the post,

for fear of being

ing weight to charges that the CIA is dominated by "war hawks." Not since 1953, before the days of CIA-director Allen Dulles, has the agency had a military boss. Too, it is ironic that the man Mr. Johnson nominated to head the nation's far-flung intelligence network has relatively little experience in intelligence work.

He 'Remembers Everyone'

But "Red" Raborn (he acquired the nickname as an auburn-haired plebe at Annapolis) has several assets that, in President Johnson's view, outweigh these liabilities. He is a top-flight administrator with a reputation for "getting tough jobs done." Both as deputy chief of naval operations for development and, for the past 2½ years, as a vice president of Aerojet-General Corp. of California, he introduced a management-control system that requires constant review of a program and permits administrators to spot possible bottlenecks before they occur. Admiral Raborn's administrative talents will no doubt prove valuable at CIA headquarters, where employees often grumble about bureaucratic snafus.

A jovial extrovert, Admiral Raborn also may be able to cultivate

closer relationships on Capitol Hill than did his two immediate predecessors. Though both Mr. Dulles and Mr. McCone were held in high regard by lawmakers, they were also considered somewhat aloof. Admiral Raborn, however, is a natural politician. "He is the kind of man," says an associate at the California aerospace company, "who comes into a room and remembers everyone."

It was on Capitol Hill that the 59-year old Navy man first came to the attention of Lyndon Johnson. As special-projects chief for the Navy in the mid-1950s, Admiral Raborn appeared frequently as a witness before then-Senator Johnson's Military Affairs subcommittee on preparedness, which kept tabs on missile developments. His smooth handling of the development of the Polaris missile, an accomplishment he attributes to his management-control system, earned him national recognition.

Unsnagging the Polaris

A native of Decatur, Texas, Raborn grew up in Marlow, Okla., and saw the sea for the first time when he enrolled at the Naval Academy. A naval aviator at the outbreak of World War II, he went on to become a command officer in the Pacific. He has been a trouble-shooter for Aerojet-General since his retirement from the Navy in September 1963.

Admiral Raborn's reputation as a man of action is well established. When snags developed in the Polaris program, he flew by jet to every plant that had a role in its development, lecturing: "Polaris is everybody's business. Stop a second and grab yourself by the back of the neck. Your neck, that's what it will be if we fail."

Some critics decry Admiral Raborn's "hard-sell" technique, but it may be just what's needed at CIA, where the competent but undramatic leadership of John McCone has failed to stop a gradual decline in morale. Morale has lagged particularly since Mr. McCone's intention to retire from public life became known last December.

Admiral Raborn's lack of intelligence training may not turn out to be a serious handicap. The President also nominated Richard G. Helms, 52, a long-time intelligence official, as deputy director. The idea that the new administration lacks professional expertise that Admiral Raborn lacks.



Adm. Raborn